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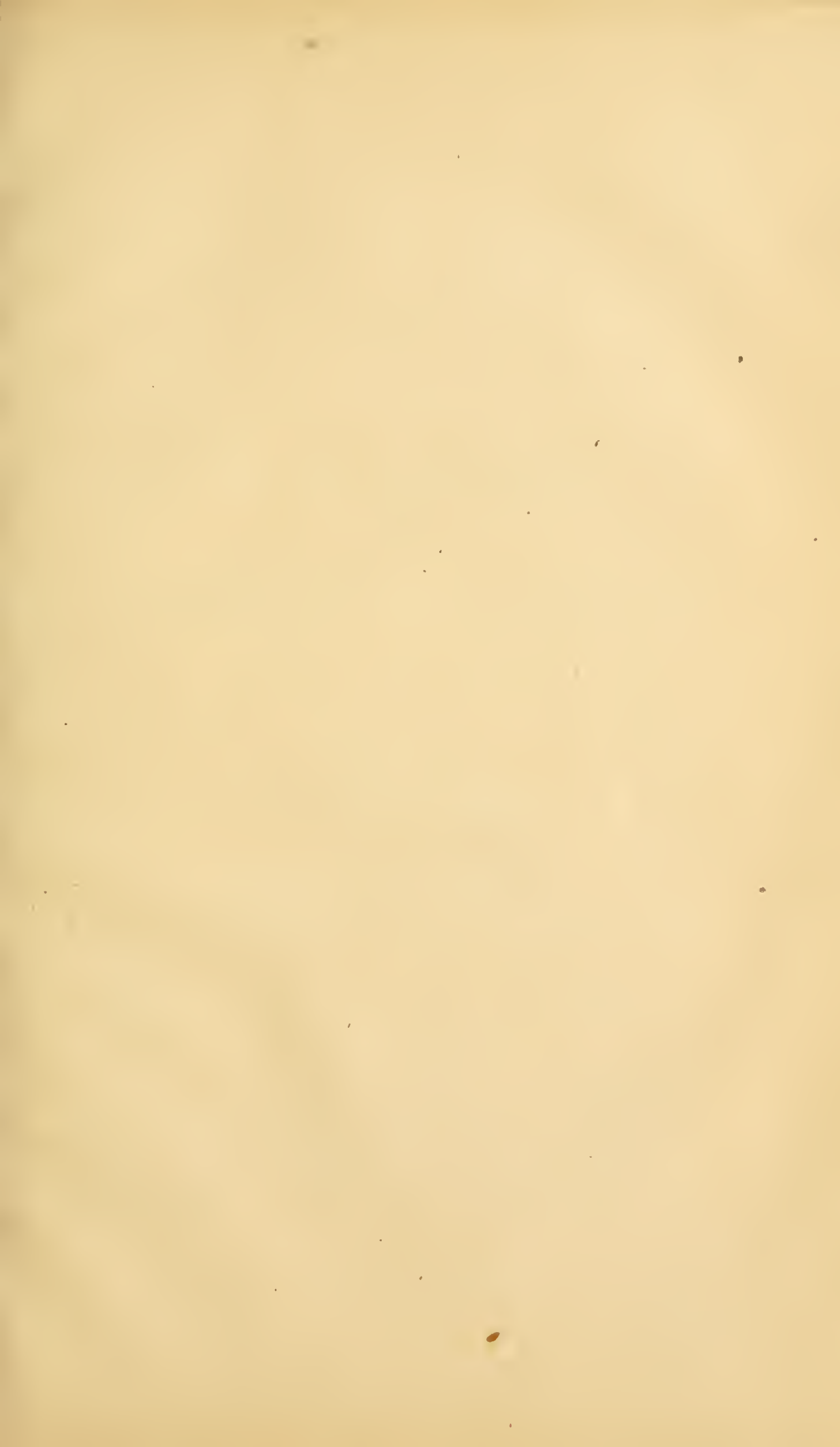
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THE
NEW ARCTIC CONTINENT,
OR
WRANGELL'S LAND.

Read before the American Association for the Advancement of Science,
Chicago, August, 1868.

4. THE NEW ARCTIC CONTINENT, OR WRANGELL'S LAND,
DISCOVERED AUGUST 14, 1867, BY CAPTAIN LONG, OF THE
AMERICAN SHIP NILE, AND SEEN BY CAPTAINS RAYNOR,
BLIVEN AND OTHERS, WITH A BRIEF NOTICE OF BARON
WRANGELL'S EXPLORATIONS IN 1823. By William W.
Wheildon, of Charlestown, Massachusetts.

IN December, 1867, considerable interest was excited through
the country by the announcement by telegraph from San Fran-
cisco, of the discovery of a "New Continent in the Arctic
Regions," which had received from the discoverer the appro-
priate name of "Wrangell's Land," after the distinguished
Russian explorer. The discovery was said to have been made

by one of the whale ships visiting the Arctic Regions through Behring Strait, which had just returned to the Sandwich Islands. It was also stated that the season had been remarkably mild—one of the most temperate ever known—and that one of the whale ships had been able to penetrate as far north as latitude $83^{\circ} 30'$. The announcement that land had been discovered in the region indicated seemed probable, but the statement of the latitude reached—never having before been attained in any part of the Arctic regions—was received with some incredulity; in addition to which there was evidently an error in the statement of the longitude as received by the telegraph. To those who were acquainted with the geography of the region indicated, hardly any reported discovery of land would have been incredible, so uncertain and imperfect was the knowledge of it; but it might have been considered, as in the present case, a rediscovery, or perhaps a simple confirmation of a general belief.

When the printed accounts reached us from the Sandwich Islands, it appeared that the land reported was first seen by Captain Long, of the American whale ship *Nile*, of New London, on the 14th of August, 1867, in clear weather. The west point, which he named “Cape Thomas” (after the seaman who first reported the land), was in latitude $70^{\circ} 46'$, longitude $178^{\circ} 30'$ E. On the morning of the 15th, the ship at 9 o'clock, was eighteen miles distant from its western point. “The lower parts of the land,” reports Captain Long, “were entirely free from snow and had a green appearance as if covered with vegetation. There was broken ice between the ship and land, but as there were no indications of whales I did not feel justified in endeavoring to work through it and reach the shore, which I think could have been done without much danger.”

Captain Long sailed to the eastward, along the land, during the 15th and 16th, and in some places approached it as near as fifteen miles. “On the 16th the weather was very clear and pleasant, and we had a good view of the middle and eastern portions of the land. Near the centre, or about in the longitude of 180° , there is a mountain which has the appearance of an extinct volcano. By approximate measurement I found it to be 2480 feet high.”

Captain Long says he had excellent observations on the 16th, and the south-eastern cape which he named Cape Hawaii, he found to be in latitude $70^{\circ} 40'$ north, and longitude $178^{\circ} 51'$ W. He adds, "it is impossible to tell how far this land extends northward, but as far as the eye could reach we could see ranges of mountains until they were lost in the distance. Captain Bliven, of the whale ship *Nautilus*, said he saw the land north-west of Herald Island, as far north as latitude 72° .

Captain Raynor, of whale ship *Reindeer*, in a letter of November 1st, 1867, to the editor of the "Pacific Commercial Advertiser," gives an account of this land, "lying in the midst of the Arctic Ocean, hitherto but little known." He says, "this land has hitherto been considered to be two islands, one of which is marked on the English maps as Plover Island, which is laid down to the W. S. W. of Herald Island. The other is simply marked 'extensive land with high peaks.' On my last cruise [the one just terminated] I sailed along the south and east side of this island for a considerable distance, three different times, and once cruised along the entire shore, and by what I considered reliable observations, made the extreme south-west cape to lie in north latitude $70^{\circ} 50'$ and east longitude $178^{\circ} 15'$. The south-east cape I found to lie in north latitude $71^{\circ} 10'$, and west longitude $176^{\circ} 40'$. The south coast appears to be nearly straight, with high rugged cliffs and entirely barren. The north-east coast I have not examined to any extent, but it appears to run from the south-east cape in a north-westerly direction for about fifteen or twenty miles and then turns to the north and north-east. I learned from Captain Bliven that he traced it much farther north, and has seen others who traced it to north of latitude 72° . I think there is no doubt that it extends much farther to the north, and that there is another island lying to the east of it, say in longitude 170° west, and to the north-east of Point Barrow, with a passage between it and the land I have just described. . . . I would add that the south-west cape of this island described above, lies seventy-five miles distant from the Asiatic or Siberian coast."

According to Captain Long's observations it will be seen that the extent of the discovered land from east to west, is 2°

Baron Wrangell, in his explorations along the coast of Siberia, in March, 1823, was visited in camp by a Tschuktschi chief, whom he represents as "a very civilized person in his way," and who drew for him with a piece of burned wood, an outline of the coast in the neighborhood of Cape Schelagskoi. "He farther assured us," says Baron Wrangell, "in the most positive manner, that there was no other island along the coast. When I asked him whether there was any other land to the north beyond the visible horizon, he seemed to reflect a little, and then said that between Cape Schelagskoi and Cape North, there was a part of the coast where, from some cliffs near the mouth of a river, one might in a clear summer's day desery snow-covered mountains at a great distance to the north, but that in winter it was impossible to see so far. He said that formerly herds of reindeer sometimes came across the ice of the sea, probably from thence, but that they had been frightened back by hunters and by wolves; that he had himself once seen a herd returning to the north in this way, in the month of April, and that he had followed them in a sledge drawn by two reindeer for a whole day, until the rugged surface of the ice forced him to desist. His opinion was that these distant mountains were not an island, but an extensive land similar to his own country. He had been told by his father that a Tschuktschi elder had once gone there with a few followers, in large *baidars*, or boats made of skins, but what they found there, or whether they ever returned, he did not know. Still he maintained that the distant northern land was inhabited, and adduced as a proof of it that some years ago a dead whale had been found at Arautan Island [on the coast near by], pierced by spears pointed with slate;* and as the Tschuktschi do not use such weapons, he supposed that the whale must have been wounded by the inhabitants of the northern land." Baron Wrangell's position when he received this information was in latitude $70^{\circ} 3'$ and longitude $171^{\circ} 3'$ East.

A few days after this, Baron Wrangell started with sledges over the ice, with a view to reach or discover this northern land. Following along the coast for a day or two, on the 13th of March, he left the shore and proceeded in a N. N. E. direc-

*The people of the Aleutian Islands use similar spear heads it is stated.

tion. With the usual difficulties of cold, wind, storm and ice hummocks, he continued on until the 23d, about ten days, having sent his sledges back excepting two. According to his reckoning he reached latitude $70^{\circ} 51'$, longitude $175^{\circ} 27'$. His distance from the coast was one hundred and five wersts or a little more than sixty geographical miles. At the extreme point of his journey, Baron Wrangell says, "we climbed one of the loftiest ice-hills, affording an extensive view towards the north, and from thence we beheld the wide immeasurable ocean spread out before our gaze. It was a fearful and magnificent spectacle. Fragments of ice of enormous size were floating on the surface of the agitated ocean, and were dashed by the waves with awful violence against the edge of the field on the farther side of the channel before us. . . . With a painful feeling of the impossibility of overcoming the obstacles which nature opposed to us, our last hope now vanished of discovering the land which we still believed to exist; and we saw ourselves compelled to renounce the object for which we had striven through three years of hardship, toil and danger. We had done, however, all that duty and honor demanded; and any farther attempts being totally hopeless, I determined to return." At this time being in latitude $70^{\circ} 51'$, longitude $175^{\circ} 27'$ E., Baron Wrangell was less than sixty miles from the westerly point of the discovered land as reported by Captain Raynor.

A few days later, early in April, 1823, Dr. Kyber, companion of Baron Wrangell, became acquainted with some Indian chiefs, who spoke much of a "more northern land, the lofty mountains of which were visible on very clear days from a place which they called Jakan, and which they described with tolerable minuteness." On the 8th of the same month Cape Jakan was reached and found to be in latitude $69^{\circ} 42'$, longitude $176^{\circ} 23'$ E., by reckoning from the previous day. "We gazed long and earnestly on the horizon, in hopes, as the atmosphere was clear, of discerning some appearance of the northern land which the Tschuktschi affirm that they have seen from this place, but we could discover nothing of it." Subsequently M. Matiuschkin made another attempt, with the consent of Baron Wrangell, to reach the northern land over the

ice, with three sledges and provisions for fifteen days. He started from the shore in latitude $69^{\circ} 28'$, longitude $177^{\circ} 44'$ E., on the 9th of April, but succeeded only in getting about sixteen wersts or about eleven miles from the coast, on account of the breaking up of the ice and the many open spaces.

Captain Kellett, of H. B. M. ship *Herald*, in July, 1849, having passed through Behring Strait and standing along the margin of the ice, discovered a group of islands in latitude $71^{\circ} 20'$, longitude $175^{\circ} 16'$ W., one of which he landed upon and named Herald island. Another island which he reported has not since been seen. Captain Raynor, it will be seen, reports another island to the eastward of Herald Island, in latitude 70° W. N. W. from Point Barrow. The Russian navigator, Sergeant Andreyer, it is stated, reached some land off the coast of Asia, in 1762, which he reported to be inhabited by a people named Kraihai.

SUMMARY.

1. Captain Long's positions, 1867,

West Point, Cape Thomas,	Latitude $70^{\circ} 46'$, Longitude $178^{\circ} 30'$ E.
South-east Point, Cape Hawaii,	Latitude $70^{\circ} 40'$, Longitude $178^{\circ} 51'$ W.
2. Captain Raynor's positions, 1867,

Extreme south-west Cape,	Latitude $70^{\circ} 50'$, Longitude $178^{\circ} 15'$ E.
South-east Cape,	Latitude $71^{\circ} 10'$, Longitude $176^{\circ} 40'$ W.
3. Captain Bliven and others traced the coast northward to Latitude 72° .
4. Baron Wrangell's farthest, in 1823,

over the ice,	Latitude $70^{\circ} 51'$, Longitude $175^{\circ} 27'$ E.
and did not see the land.	
5. Captain Kellett's position, 1849,

	Latitude $71^{\circ} 20'$, Longitude $175^{\circ} 16'$ W.
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Since the preceding pages were written, a new edition of the map entitled "Behring Sea and Arctic Ocean, from surveys of the U. S. North Pacific Surveying Expedition, in 1855, by Commander John Rodgers, U. S. N. commanding, and from

Russian and English authorities," has been issued from the "Hydrographic Office, U. S. Navy," with "additions to July, 1868." The land seen and named by Capt. Long, is laid down upon the map in accordance with his statements; and a drawing is also given of the land, with its elevated points, probably from a sketch made by Capt. Long. "Wrangell's Land," we may here remark, falls about ten degrees westerly of the present boundary of the United States in the latitude of 70° .

The new boundary of the United States passes through the middle of Behring Strait, between the Diomed Islands, one degree south of the Arctic Circle, leaving Ratmanov Island on the Russian side and Kreusenstern Island on the American side. From this point it reaches towards the North Pole on the meridional line of $168^{\circ} 50'$ west longitude from Greenwich. From the Diomed Islands it runs in a nearly south-west direction in the North Pacific Ocean, to latitude 50° , in longitude about 168° east. So that, at the present time, the territory of the United States extends in an east and west direction from longitude 67° west (at Eastport, Maine), to longitude 168° east in the North Pacific Ocean (beyond the most westerly island of the Aleutian Group), equal to 125° of longitude, which on the parallel of 45° north latitude would be equal to about five thousand three hundred and three geographical miles, or six thousand one hundred and eighty-seven statute miles. The position at the mouth of Columbia River is nearly in the middle of this line and the central point east and west of the United States territory, it being about the same distance from Eastport to the mouth of Columbia River that it is from the Columbia River to the most western extremity of the Aleutian Islands.

Although the newly discovered land does not fall within the enlarged limits of the United States, the honor of the discovery of it belongs to our countrymen; and the act of Captain Long in giving the name of Baron Wrangell to it, although it was never seen by him, is a well-deserved compliment to that intelligent and indefatigable explorer and to his country. The propriety of the name is generally admitted, and it has been promptly, in the first instance, adopted by our government in its first official publication—the map above mentioned—and it will no doubt be universally accepted.





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